

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 4-14, and 16-22 are currently pending. Claims 3, 15, and 23 have been cancelled without prejudice; and Claims 1, 2, 4-10, 13, 14, 16, 17, and 22 have been amended by the present amendment. The changes to the claims were supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

In the outstanding Office Action the specification was objected to regarding various informalities in paragraphs 6 and 104; Claims 1, 2, 6-10, 13, 14, and 18-23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,818,603 to Motoyama (hereinafter "the '603 patent"); Claims 11 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the '603 patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,421,429 to Merritt et al. (hereinafter "the '429 patent"); and Claims 3-5 and 15-17 were objected as being dependent upon a rejected based claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

In response to the objections to the specification, the specification has been amended in paragraphs 6 and 104 to address the informalities noted in the Office Action. Accordingly, the objections to the specification are believed to have been overcome.

Regarding the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitations recited in Claim 3, which was indicated as allowable. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claim 1 (and dependent Claims 2, 6-10, 21, and 22) is rendered moot by the present amendment to Claim 1. Further, Applicants note that dependent Claims 2, 6-10, and 22 have been amended to be consistent with the amendments to Claim 1.

Claim 13 has been amended to incorporate the limitations recited in dependent Claim 15, which was indicated as allowable. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the

rejection of Claim 13 (and dependent Claims 14 and 18-20) is rendered moot by the present amendment to Claim 13. Further, Applicants note that dependent Claim 14 has been amended to be consistent with the amendment to Claim 14.

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claim 23 is rendered moot by the present cancellation of that claim.

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of dependent Claims 11 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 is rendered moot by the present amendment to Claim 1.

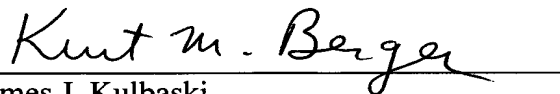
Applicants note that dependent Claims 4, 5, 16, and 17, which were indicated as allowable, have been rewritten in independent form.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 1, 4, 5, 13, 16, and 17 (and all associated dependent claims) are in condition for formal allowance.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussion, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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